

# **LOWER SUNBURY RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at The Riverside Arts Centre, Thames Street, Sunbury, on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024 at 8.00 pm.**

## **Present**

- (i) Committee members: Paul Watts PW (President), Paul Thompson PT (Chairman), Iain Findlay IF (Treasurer), John Hirsh JH (Vice Chairman), Neil Huntingford NH, Stacey Pinto SP.
- (ii) Cllrs. Kathy Grant, Matthew Lee, Laurence Nichols,
- (iii) Other members: 50 approximately.

**Apologies for Absence Committee:** Colleen Cuthbert CC, Chris Hyde CH, Nigel Spooner NS, Joyti Banerjee JB, Oliver Parr OP,

**Apologies for Absence Councillors:** Sarah Dunn, Buddi Weerasinghe, John Turner

**Minutes of AGM held on 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024.**

## **Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting – Approved**

### **Chairman's Report**

PT said

LOSRA newsletters are delivered 3 times a year and delivered to over 4000 households in the Lower Sunbury Community using Sunbury Matters distribution network. Contact LOSRA through the website if you have not received one and sign up to the E-Bulletin via the website for free. Just under 1000 residents subscribe to the E-Bulletin currently. LOSRA's principal motivation is a desire to help, as far as possible, protect, maintain, and preserve for future generations the environment in which we live. The constitution requires we have no political or religious affiliations, and we strictly abide by that. We also work in partnership with Spelthorne Borough Council or other political representatives where appropriate to meet our stated aims.

There are vacancies for new members so if anyone is interested in finding out more, please contact LOSRA. Committee meetings are open to observers and from time to time we also invite representatives from Sunbury Ward and County Councillors to meetings to broaden communication. In the last 12 months LOSRA has been involved in a wide range of local issues, including attending the Council Resident Association meetings (Spelthorne Partnership Assembly), being part of the process for the best value inspection, objective to proposed developments where we believe they would be overbearing or out of character with the surrounding street scene, providing advice to local developers regarding prospective sites, liaison with Hazlewood London Irish on the implications of a change in ownership, representation on the River Users Group and Charlton Lane Eco Park Community Liaison Group, making representations to TfL & SBC on the provision of toilet facilities for bus drivers at Sunbury Park and serving on the patient participation group of Sunbury Health Centre. After 1 year the legal detail is still awaiting to be agreed to sort out the match funding deal between NHS estates and Spelthorne Borough Council for modernization measures to improve the environment and capacity for appointments.

PT highlighted 3 specific issues.

BESS – Battery Energy Storage System which was covered in the AGM newsletter. Noted during the meeting that the Application had been withdrawn by the developers after the submission of the Planning Officer's report recommending the development for refusal based on Inappropriate development in the Greenbelt, impact on Character and Appearance and Road Safety Impact to M3.

River Thames Scheme which was covered in the AGM Newsletter. LOSRA sceptical that Lower Sunbury will actually see a reduction in flood levels as a result of the scheme would be an understatement.

LOSRA have been involved in the Local Plan for a very long time. A summary of the latest position is included in the AGM Newsletter. The Council's decision to pause and modify the outline plan after submission to the examination in public leaves us in limbo which is exacerbated by the upcoming general election. The absence of a local plan leaves the council open to opportunities planning applications from developers.

Individual committee members have been involved in a variety of issues where LOSRA's expertise have been helpful to residents.

It will not be necessary to ask for additional funds this year as we have prudently managed costs and accumulated reserves over the years against eventualities such as the need for expert legal advice. However, the current membership fee of £5 per household has not been reviewed since 2008, so we will keep this under review for the future.

PT expressed thanks to the other committee members for their continued support and especially to John Hirsh the Vice Chairman and one of PT's predecessors as Chairman. John is standing down this year but has been an invaluable support and grateful he is remaining on the committee. I am delighted that Stacey Pinto has agreed to take on the Vice Chair role. PT also thanks the members and Corporate Sponsors from the Lower Sunbury Business Community for ongoing financial support.

### **Treasurer's Report - Accounts for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023**

IF reported on the accounts. We are approx. £1000 behind pre-covid levels which is primarily linked to lower membership levels, there were 335 members in 2023 and 2024 is likely to be similar. There is a deficit for the first time due to legal advice being employed to cover the Local Plan which was jointly funded by KKG; LOSRA's portion was £3300. If we had not employed legal advice, we would have had a small surplus of approx. £300-400. We have substantial reserves which we have used to cover the deficit.

Membership is per household and PayPal can be used to pay membership or provide donations on the Website. Skinners and The Good Estate Agent will take memberships on behalf of LOSRA.

Thanks were expressed to CC for her role as Membership Secretary.

A question was asked by a resident as to whether LOSRA allowed Gift Aid. IF noted LOSRA is not a registered Charity. Different donations options were being explored on the website to offer more flexibility. It was confirmed members can set up standing orders with LOSRA.

The accounts were approved. **Dominic de Lord of Crick Heitman Ltd.** was reappointed **Independent Reporting Accountant**.

### **Election of Officers and Committee**

**Paul Watts** was proposed to be re-elected as **President**. Agreed. It was proposed **Paul Thompson** be re-elected as **Chairman**, **Colleen Cuthbert** as **Secretary & Membership Secretary**, **Iain Findlay** as **Treasurer**, **John Hirsh**, **Jyoti Banerjee**, **Neil Huntingford**, **Chris Hyde**, **Oliver Parr**, **Nigel Spooner** as **committee members** and **Stacey Pinto** be elected as **Vice Chairman** - all approved.

### **Guest Speaker Daniel Mouawad (DM), Chief Executive of Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC)**

#### **Best Value Inspection**

SBC has been through a number of reviews and audits over the last 12-18 months. The Best Value Inspection is as a result of new Guidance that the Secretary of State has commissioned to be undertaken for Spelthorne as the first authority being reviewed under this guidance. DM noted this is the culmination of all of the previous reviews and said he is welcoming of all reviews of the Council.

DM stated SBC has borrowed £1bn to invest in assets between 2016-2018 and since then SBC has been managing this portfolio. From this portfolio annually there is £50m with some used to pay off the interest, fund the management and some is put away for a rainy day. £10m is used to cross-subsidise discretionary services for resident, for example meals on wheels, Spelride, Community centres.

Spelthorne Leisure Centre is the largest leisure centre built to Passivhaus standards and will run 70% less energy than typical leisure centres.

The Local Plan has been paused and unfortunately is behind the scheduled timetable due to the delayed response from the Environment Agency as their communications have not been clear and SBC has invited them to be clearer. There has been a key mandate from the chamber that nothing can be included if it has not been robustly agreed and there needs to be a discussion with the EA on where the red lines are. SBC are close to this point and have nearly agreed the wording for any development sites in Staines that rely on the River Thames Scheme being implemented to make a material difference to flooding impacts as the DCO for the River Thames Scheme is not in place and this cannot be relied on. The EA have made it clear SBC does not currently have the positives from the River Thames Scheme to use in the Local Plan for development Sites.

DM noted it is unlikely the public examination would resume before September due to the summer recess. DM noted that he does not believe the DCO funding will stretch to cover an additional bridge over the river Thames in Sunbury.

DM answered specific questions raised to the Resident Association (Spelthorne Partnership Assembly)

#### 1) Community Toilet Scheme.

What prompts my question is that, as you may be aware, there have been problems in the past with bus drivers on the 216 & 235 routes using Sunbury Park as an 'emergency' lavatory. At one time, there was an informal arrangement that they could use the Three Fishes pub opposite, but this seems to have fallen by the wayside. I have spoken to Cllr Buddhi Weerasinghe about this in the past and he said he was willing to contribute towards the cost of a 'portaloo' but arrangements would need to be made for its ongoing costs of regular care & maintenance. I have had correspondence with TfL and SBC (Alex Lacey) in the past, but no-one seems willing to take responsibility.

If the Community Toilet Scheme could be made to work, this would potentially solve the problem. I looked at the Forward Plan, but I can't see any potential locations; if it hasn't already been identified as a suitable/likely location, how do we get this onto the list of potential locations and what do we need to do to progress it?

#### Response

*The Neighbourhood Service and Environment Committee discussed a community toilet scheme at the last committee meeting, it was agreed that officers would further look at what toilet facilities were open to general members of the public in the vicinity of train stations. A community toilet scheme has a cost and the committee did not wish to move this option forward at this time. TFL are considering their options for providing rest facilities for their staff in this area, as this is not a Council responsibility. Sian Bowen, Asset Manager and Asha Hunjan, Property manager met with Senior Property Surveyor (TfL Property Services Business Services) at the beginning of May. TFL have confirmed that they would look to install a permanent facility for their bus drivers at their own expense and would maintain the facility throughout the term. Their proposals are at a very early stage.*

#### 2) Littering

There has been a noticeable increase in litter around Sunbury and broken glass and debris. I know it has been incredibly wet but what are the cleaning regimes for the streets and has this changed or is rubbish just increasing. Are there campaigns that can be done to improve education around litter dropping.

#### Response

*There has not been a change to the cleaning regimes in Sunbury and this suggested issue is not being relayed to the depot for action. We would urge anyone noticing litter to report it via the councils e-forms. We have recently been asking residents via our different communication platforms to report any issues including littering and dog fouling on our 'Report It' platform [www.spelthorne.gov.uk/report](http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/report), which has seen a 50% increase on reports received year on year for the first half of 2024, resulting in the Council being able to take swift action.*

*Earlier this year we launched Keep Spelthorne Clean - a community campaign which aims to encourage everyone to take pride in Spelthorne by helping to make a difference in our neighbourhoods, town centres, parks and open spaces. We worked with local primary schools and ran a poster competition with the winners featuring in our Spring Bulletin magazine and winning designs are featured on new banners which are displayed at over 30 locations around the borough. Later in the year we will be holding our Eco Conference with local school children which will also address the issue of littering and the importance of protecting our environment.*

*Some actions we have undertaken include:*

- implemented a Public Space Protection Order on the misuse of public land for taxis, tents and BBQs following a residents' consultation.*
- secured funding to install CCTV cameras to manage fly-tipping hotspots.*
- trialling new ways of working to address the issues of street sweeping in difficult to access roads such using parking suspensions in partnership with Surrey County Council*
- responding to requests to remove public facing and offensive graffiti within 48 hours and removing chewing gum from pavements in the key shopping areas.*

*We are also continuing to work with community groups in the borough:*

- we can supply a range of equipment including bags, litter pickers, signage and gloves and our teams can collect and dispose of litter collected as part of your community litter pick.*
- If you are aware of specific areas where some additional focus may be needed to tackle local issues, please let us know. This could include extra street sweeping if the residents can arrange for their road to be kept clear of cars.*
- If groups are working on a project to tidy up or improve their local area, they may wish to approach their Ward Councillor who may be able to support you with a Better Neighbourhood Grant.*

*Finally, we have been asking residents via our different communication platforms to report any issues including littering and dog fouling on our 'Report It' platform [www.spelthorne.gov.uk/report](http://www.spelthorne.gov.uk/report), which has seen a 50% increase on reports received year on year for the first half of 2024, resulting in the Council being able to take swift action.*

### 3) River Thames Scheme

Does SBC believe that the River Thames Scheme will bring any benefits to Sunbury-on-Thames? Does it support the proposal that the 'Sunbury Crossing' should be part of the RTS in order to give Sunbury residents access to the scheme's Active Travel Route?

#### Response

*Spelthorne Borough Council believes that the River Thames Scheme will bring benefits for communities across our borough, whether it be flood risk reduction, access to active travel routes, new open green space or improved biodiversity.*

*While the greater reductions in flood risk are in proximity to the flood alleviation channel, communities further downstream will still benefit from a more modest reduction in flood risk. Modelling from the River*

*Thames Scheme (available on their website) shows there will be no increase in flooding across the scheme. In Sunbury the reduction in flood risk varies between a couple of centimetres cm and 12/15cm, depending on the location.*

*While a bridge at Sunbury is not within the River Thames Scheme proposals, following the close of the consultation, the project team have been reading, reviewing and analysing all the feedback received from all residents. I know colleagues from the River Thames Scheme are engaging with residents and will continue to do so, in order to keep them updated on how the scheme develops.*

#### Questions from Audience

- Polling stations were not also provided as the nearest to resident's addresses. DM noted that boundaries were not geographical but on the number of voters expected at a polling station. Any issues should be raised with SBC directly and discussed to see if changes could be made for individuals.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Runway Heathrow is unlikely to be pursued in the near future. There has been a change in shareholders at the airport. Air traffic movements will increase with new technology and use of gates and satellites. There is a major national review of airspace and greater reliance on satellites not radar which will result in different routes and approaches to Heathrow being used. The use of independent parallel approaches will increase.
- DM was not aware of any proposals to separate Spelthorne from Surrey or London, or into London. DM did note a lot of voters had turned up to the elections previously thinking they could vote in the London Mayor elections and Spelthorne was in an unusual position with very similar issues to adjacent London boroughs rather than Surrey.
- DM answered a question about the return from investments and whether this was considered good compared to similar portfolios. DM noted it was a high reserve against budget and the management of a £1bn portfolio is critical and not an easy job but DM noted the Officers manage it well. DM made the point that there may well be some teachings from how SBC manage a property portfolio for the Civil Service out of the Best Value Inspection.

#### **Update on Lower Sunbury Hedgehog Project**

PW stated that The Lower Sunbury Hedgehog Project is an initiative by The Lower Sunbury Residents Association (LOSRA) in partnership with The Friends of Sunbury Park, Spelthorne natural History Society and Spelthorne Borough Council. There have been articles in Sunbury Matters and on the LOSRA website, both linking to the Project's Facebook page.

This is a subject which is all positive and a domestic initiative for residents to create hedgehog highways across Lower Sunbury to improve breeding and create better habitats for Hedgehogs.

The Project's aim is to arrest the decline in our local hedgehog population and if possible, improve their number, mainly by expanding and improving their habitats. Hedgehogs thrive in domestic gardens, but they travel a kilometer or two at a time during the night as they forage, meaning they need to move easily between gardens. We can play our part by making a small hole (5 x 5 inches, 130 x 130mm) at ground level in our garden fences and walls for them to get through. This small action can create what's known as a 'hedgehog highway'.

Lower Sunbury is ideally suited to provide large areas of linked hedgehog habitats, with roads that have many houses with good-sized bordering gardens, some linking to parks, playing fields, school grounds and other open spaces to make even more effective "hedgehog highways", and we are encouraging residents to get involved in helping to achieve this.

We would like to think that schools could play an important role in this – hedgehogs are creatures that appeal to everyone, and school students could help by encouraging their parents to link their gardens to neighbours. We have communicated with schools and will hopefully be taking part in Assemblies and raising awareness over the next few months.

Hedgehog highways and sightings can be mapped on Hedgehog Street, and we can then see the difference the project is making.

### **Open Forum /Any Other Business**

Questions were asked about the current state of Kempton Park in line with the pause in the Local Plan and speculative development and the fact the Jockey Club want to sell it.

PT noted that Kempton Park was classified greenbelt and all greenbelts had been taken out of the Local Plan. Although it was a concern that the Local Plan had been paused, and nothing to stop an application it was not to say that anything would get approved.

Ian Beardsmore noted that there was still a defensible position and Spelthorne Borough Council would not support development on Kempton Park.

Kathy Grant noted that the EA and flooding was serious risk to the Local Plan which was not foreseen when the local plan was being developed.

Matthew Lee asked whether anybody had any views on the width issues on Thames Street as he had taken this up with Surrey County Council, but nothing had progressed. PT asked if there were any suggested solutions presented to SurreyCC and it was confirmed that a width restriction was proposed. Matthew Lee stated that as he was not getting any traction with SurreyCC he wondered if LOSRA would take up the issue. Mixed views were expressed with the conclusion that it was difficult to find a solution to a historical issue. PT noted it would be raised at the next LOSRA committee meeting to see if there were any different views. PW noted that the biggest issue was vehicles parking on the yellow lines at The Avenue/Thames Street Junction with enforcement being taken back into SCC from SBC. Kathy Grant raised an issue with cyclists along Lower Hampton Road/Thames Street and the speed at which they travel in Peletons. The difference in speed limits along this road was also mentioned which Matthew Lee noted he had spoken to SurreyCC about, but they had noted they did not believe it was an existing concern.

**Close Meeting** - The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 10.00 pm.